

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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Z 311805Z AUG 76 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 6589

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV FLASH

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 11702

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, PFOR, EG, IS, US

SUBJ: ISRAELI ACTION AGAINST AMOCO RIG IN RAMADHAN FIELD

1. UNLESS WE ACT QUICKLY, THE MAKINGS OF EGYPTIAN-  
ISRAELI INCIDENT ARE IMMINENT.

2. ROSS CRAIG OF AMOCO TELEPHONED ME FEW MINUTES AGO  
(1815 LOCAL) TO SAY THAT ONE HOUR EARLIER (1700 LOCAL)  
AN ISRAELI GUNBOAT HAD ORDERED AMOCO RIG, MARINER,  
WHICH MOVED TO 304.1 SITE TODAY, TO STOP PREPARATIONS  
FOR DRILLING AND MOVE OUT IN EIGHT HOURS. RIG, WHICH  
LEFT THIS MORNING AFTER UNMOLESTED PRELIMINARY SURVEY  
BY SMALLER VESSELS, PROCEEDED TO SITE THIS MORNING,  
DROPPED ANCHORS AND WAS RAISING RIG PREPARATORY TO  
DRILLING WITHOUT ANY ISRAELI MOLESTATION THROUGHOUT  
THE DAY. ISRAELI GUNBOAT HAD APPEARED AS JACKING UP  
OPERATIONS WERE GETTING UNDERWAY AND DELIVERED EIGHT-  
HOUR ULTIMATUM. ISRAELIS APPARENTLY DID NOT INDICATE  
WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF AMOCO RIG IS NOT REMOVED.

3. WHILE CRAIG WOULD LIKE TO CALL ISRAELI BLUFF, HE  
IS CONCERNED ABOUT SAFETY OF AMERICAN FLAGSHIP AND  
AMERICANS ABOARD THE RIG. HE HAS RECEIVED INSTRUCTION  
FROM MINPET AHMED HILAL, THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY, THAT  
HE IS NOT RPT NOT TO MOVE THE RIG UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.  
CRAIG DOES NOT WANT TO GO AGAINST HILAL'S WISHES,  
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BUT ALSO OBJECTS TO MARINER BEING USED BY EGYPTIANS TO

ASSERT THEIR RIGHTS. HE BELIEVES HE HAS NO FEASIBLE OPTION BUT TO ORDER MARINER TO MOVE OUT UNDER PROTEST AND TRY AGAIN TOMORROW. HE CONSIDERES THIS ISRAELI ULTIMATUM AS FORCE MAJEUR, BUT IS CONCERNED THAT HILAL APPARENTLY DOES NOT. IN ANY CASE, CRAIG NOTES EIGHT HOURS, I.E., 0100 LOCAL SINCE MORNING, IS INSUFFICIENT TIME FOR RIG TO GET UNDERWAY. IT TAKES FIVE HOURS TO LIFT ANCHORS. RIG IS STILL AWAITING INSTRUCTION FROM AMOCO CAIRO HEADQUARTERS, WHICH CRAIG CANNOT GIVE UNTIL HE HAS WORD FROM HILAL. IN RESPONSE HIS QUERY FOR MY VIEW, I TOLD HIM THAT I THOUGHT ISRAELIS WERE WRONG IN WHAT THEY WERE DOING, BUT I ALSO DID NOT SEE WISDOM OF MAKING MARINER AND AMERICAN CREW GUINEA PIGS IN THIS MATTER. IF HE DECIDED ORDER RIG OUT, HE SHOULD DO SO UNDER PROTEST. CRAIG IS TRYING TO GET IN TOUCH WITH HILAL TO TRY TO ARGUE THE MINISTER OUT OF HIS STAND-FAST POSITION.

4. WHILE I WAS TALKING TO CRAIG, HILAL TELEPHONED ME. WHEN I GOT HIM BACK, HE ALSO RELATED ABOVE INCIDENT. HILAL CONFIRMED HE HAD GIVEN AMOCO ORDERS NOT RPT NOT TO PULL OUT THE RIG. THE ISRAELIS ARE BLUFFING AND CRAIG'S FORMER ACTING CHIEF CAMPBELL, WHO WAS HERE LAST FALL, HAD SUCCESSFULLY CALLED SUCH ISRAELI BLUFF. HILAL SAID HE HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH FAHMY AND GAMASY AND GAMASY HAS GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS TO SEND EGYPTIAN GUNBOATS TO AREA IMMEDIATELY TO PROTECT MARINER. THESE GUNBOATS SHOULD BE AT AREA 304.1 SITE IN ABOUT TWO HOURS. GAMASY HAD SAID THAT IF ISRAELIS WANT TO FIGHT, THEY CAN HAVE IT. I TOLD HILAL THAT HE COULD NOT REASONABLY EXPECT AMERICAN SHIP AND AMERICAN CREWMEN TO BE IN FRONT-LINE AND TO BE PAWNS IN THIS MATTER. HILAL STRONGLY OBJECTED. ACCORDING TO HIM, THEY ARE NOT IN FRONTLINE, BUT IN EGYPTIAN-OWNED RAMADAN OIL FIELD CARRYING OUT THEIR PROPER DUTIES. WE WANT THROUGH THIS SEVERAL TIMES, BUT HILAL WOULD NOT RPT NOT BUDGE. HE COULD NOT ACCEPT ANY FORCE MAJEUR ARGUMENT BECAUSE OF ISRAELI INTERVENTION. HE WAS ADAMENT THAT AMOCO NOT RPT NOT ORDER MARINER OUT. HE DID NOT ASK FOR SPECIFIC US INTERVENTION, BUT SAID THAT, SPEAKING IN BEHALF OF FAHMY AND GAMASY (AND HE WAS SURE

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THE PRESIDENT), HE WANTED US TO KNOW EGYPTIAN POSITION.

5. SINCE TALKING WITH HILAL, I WAS ABLE GET IN TOUCH WITH ROSS CRAIG AGAIN. IN VIEW HILAL'S INSTRUCTIONS, AND FACT THAT MARINER RIG CANNOT POSSIBLY LEAVE SIT BY 0100 WEDNESDAY MORNING, CRAIG SAYS HE HAS NO RPT NO OPTION BUT TO KEEP THE VESSEL AT SITE. HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE CREW, HOWEVER. ALTHOUGH ONLY ONE AMOCO EMPLOYEE

IS ABOARD, THE REST ARE SANTA FE EMPLOYEES. HE IS CURRENTLY DISCUSSING WITH SANTA FE MANGER BACKER WHAT BACKER WANTS DONE WITH ITS EMPLOYEES ON RIG. CRAIG HAS ASKED HILAL'S ASSISTANT, AYUTI, TO TRY TO OBTAIN PERMISSION OF EGYPTIAN MILITARY AT RAS SHUKAIR TO SEND HELICOPTERS TO THE RIG IMMEDIATELY TO TAKE THE AMERICANS OFF. HE DOUBTS THAT HE CAN GET SUCH PERMISSION, SINCE AMONG OTHER CONSIDERATIONS HELICOPTER OPERATIONS ARE DIFFICULT AT NIGHT. HE HAS TWO WORK BOATS STANDING BY NEAR MARINER FOR THIS SAME PURPOSE, PROVIDED HILAL AGREES THAT AMERICANS BE TAKEN OFF. HE IS NOW TRYING TO GET IN TOUCH WITH HILAL OR AYUTI TO OBTAIN GOE CONSENT TO TAKING AMRICANS OFF, BUT EXPECTS MINPET WILL OBJECT. ADDITIONALLY, SINCE AMOCO IS ALSO DRILLING THREE OTHER WELLS NEAR 304.1 SITE IN RAMADHAN FIELD, HE HAS SENT INSTRUCTIONS TO STOP THOSE DRILLING OPERATIONS. HE IS CONCERNED THAT IF FIRE-FIGHT DEVELOPS IN RAMADHAM FIELD BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND EGYPTIANS, ONE OR ANOTHER OF THESE DRILLING OPERATIONS MIGHT BE HIT WITH DANGER OF CONFLAGRATION. CRAIG IS EXPERIENCING CONSIDERABLE COMMUNICATIONS DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN CAIRO AND RAS SHUKAIR. HE WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH ME LATER TO LET ME KNOW HILAL'S AND SANTA FE MANAGER'S VIEWS RE REMOVING AMERICAN PERSONNEL.

REQUEST DEPT INSTRUCT TEL AVIV BY FLASH MESSAGE TO APPROACH GOI TO TAKE NECESSARY STEPS TO DEFUSE THIS POTENTIALLY SERIOUS INCIDENT.  
EILTS

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